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September 25, 2014

**TO:** Licensed Acute Care Hospitals  
Skilled Nursing Facilities  
Intermediate Care Facilities

**FROM:** Jeffrey D. Gunzenhauser, M.D., M.P.H.  
Interim Health Officer, Los Angeles County

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Gunzenhauser, M.D., M.P.H." with a stylized flourish at the end.

**RE: Continuation of Health Officer Order for Annual Influenza Vaccination Programs for Healthcare Personnel or Masking of Health Care Workers during the Influenza Season**

With influenza season approaching, this letter is a reminder that the “Health Officer Order for Annual Influenza Vaccination Programs for Healthcare Personnel or Masking of Health Care Workers during the Influenza Season” remains in effect. The Health Officer Order mandating that licensed facilities require influenza vaccination for their health care personnel (HCP) was issued in October 2013 (attached). For HCPs who decline to be vaccinated, the Order requires that they wear a mask when they are in contact with patients during the annual influenza season. The intention of this Order is to lower the risk of transmission of influenza to patients in licensed acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and intermediate care facilities in the County. Preliminary data indicate that the implementation of this Order last year in hospitals was generally successful, increasing HCP influenza vaccination from about 69% to nearly 90%.

The Health Officer Order, issued pursuant to my authority under §120175 of the California Health and Safety Code, pertains to the period of November 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup> of every year, unless extended due to ongoing influenza activity. As noted in the Order, every licensed acute care hospital, skilled nursing facility, and intermediate care facility within the County of Los Angeles public health jurisdiction must implement a program requiring that healthcare personnel at such facilities receive an annual influenza vaccination for the current season or wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season while in contact with patients or working in patient-care areas.

By law, acute care hospitals in California must annually offer free influenza vaccinations on-site to their employees and require all to be vaccinated; any employee who elects not to be vaccinated must provide the hospital with a written declaration that he or she has declined the vaccination [Cal. Health & Safety Code §1288.7(a)]. In addition, occupational safety regulations mandate that many types of health care facilities, including acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and intermediate care facilities, make seasonal influenza vaccine reasonably available to all employees with occupational exposure and ensure that each employee who refuses the vaccine signs a statement declining vaccination [8 Cal. Code Regs. §5199 (c)(6)(D) & (h)(10)].

Facilities are also required by California law to report HCP immunization data annually. Per AFL 10-29 (originally AFL 08-17), all hospitals must track and report influenza vaccination and declination of hospital personnel including paid employees, non-employee physicians, podiatrists, and dentists, non-employee advanced practice nurses, non-employee physician assistants, and hospital volunteers. In addition, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) requests that all hospitals maintain records of nosocomial influenza infections (onset  $\geq 72$  hours after admission) as well as personnel absenteeism data (paid-time-off or preferably sick leave).

Thank you in advance for complying with the California reporting requirements and the DPH request as these data play a key role in our ability to assess our joint efforts to improve influenza prevention among high risk populations in healthcare facilities.

Please also find attached a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that responds to some of the queries received last season about the Order. Further questions may be directed to the Los Angeles County Immunization Program at (213) 351-7800 or e-mail to [ip@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:ip@ph.lacounty.gov).

The Department of Public Health shares with the County's healthcare professionals and facilities the goal that our population receives safe and effective care. We look forward to all facilities subject to this Order again complying fully with its requirements.

Attachments:

- 1) 2013 Health Officer Order
- 2) Frequently Asked Questions